

# Inclusive practices for working with traumatised children

Based on the work of  
'Calmer Classrooms' State Gov of Victoria  
and 'Making Space for Learning' Australian Childhood Foundation

# Outcomes for today

- Further our understanding of trauma and its effects on academic and social functioning
- Explore strategies for schools to use in planning supports for students
- Raise awareness of resources and supports

# 3 Types of trauma

Growing body of research has identified three types of trauma

Simple

Complex

Developmental

# Simple Trauma



# Simple Trauma

- Overwhelming and painful
- Often a discrete crisis
- Less stigma attached
- No blame of victims
- Experiences of events that are life threatening and / or have the potential to cause serious injury
- Often single incident
- Helpful and supportive community response

# Complex trauma



# Complex trauma

- Interpersonal threat, violence and violation
- Generally includes multiple incidents and is therefore longer in duration
- Almost always associated with stigma / shame
- Community responses are often not helpful, further blaming and disempowering the targets of violence
- Victims experiences isolation and sometimes a sense of betrayal
- E.g. child abuse, bullying, domestic violence, rape, war, imprisonment



# Developmental trauma





# Developmental trauma

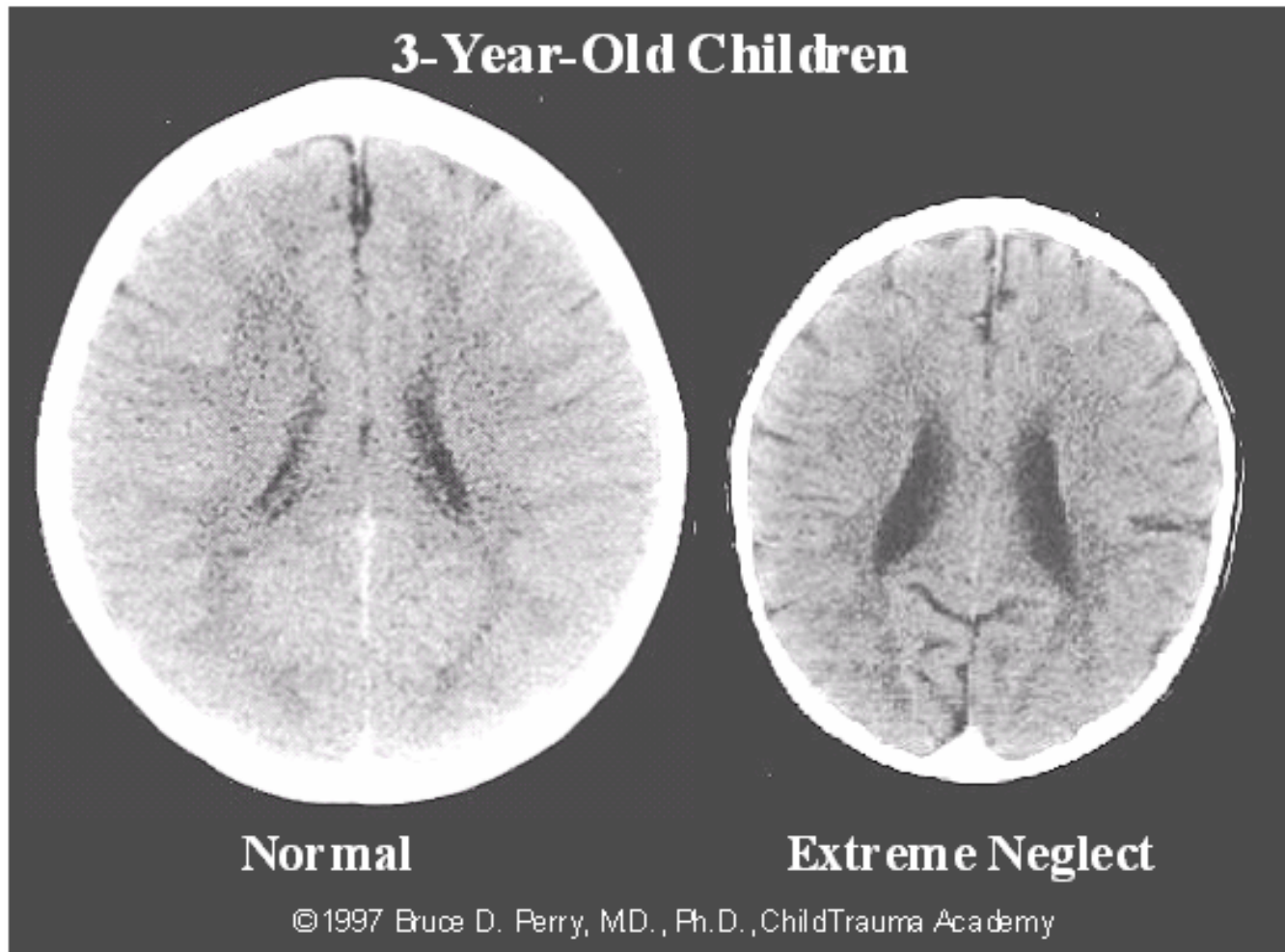


# Developmental trauma

- Children and young people are very vulnerable to the effects of trauma because of their brain's developmental immaturity
- A child's brain is so malleable that the impact of trauma is faster to manifest and leaves deeper tracks of damage
- A child's development can slow down or be impaired following trauma
- If it is the adults that should be caring for them that are the cause of any harm, children are even more intensely affected
- Eg Divorce, family violence, high parental conflict, neglect, abuse

*The media pays more attention to one off traumas of natural disasters or acts of random violence than it does to child abuse, even though it is known that around 80% of trauma occurs within the family setting*

# Visible effect of trauma on the developing brain



# Activity

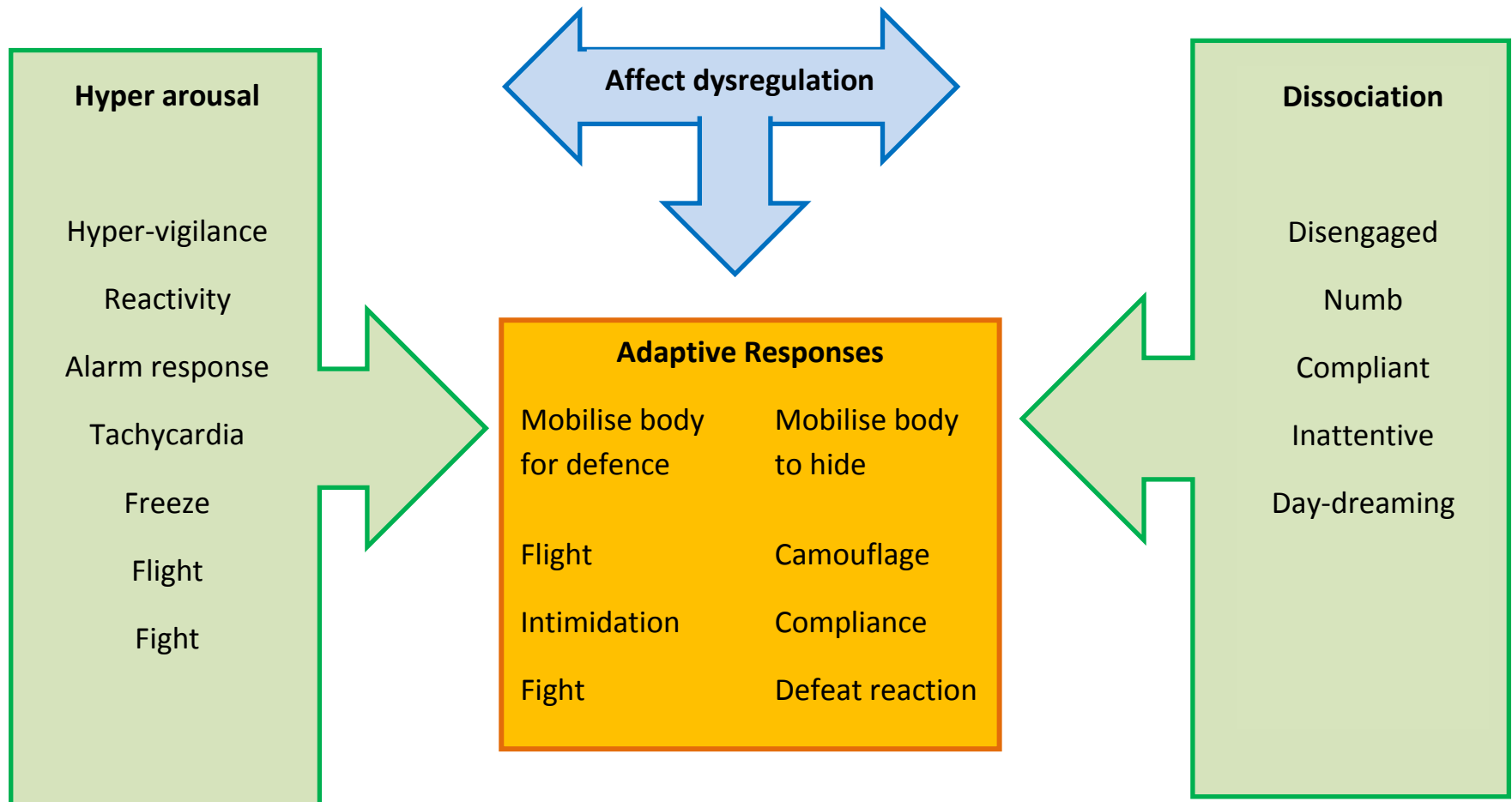
- In your pair talk about a child you have worked with who has experienced trauma.
- How did / do they present at school / in the classroom?
- Identify the type of trauma
- Be prepared to share how they present at school to the rest of the group.

Feedback to group

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGDqJYEiKs>

# Affect Dysregulation

The capacity to regulate our emotions is built during the early years of life. This is known as 'affect regulation' and relies on an attuned attachment relationship with a well regulated care giver. Attachment difficulties and experiences of trauma lead to poor affect regulation.





# Complex layers of experience

Insecure infancy



Harsh neglectful parenting



No loving attachment with caregiver

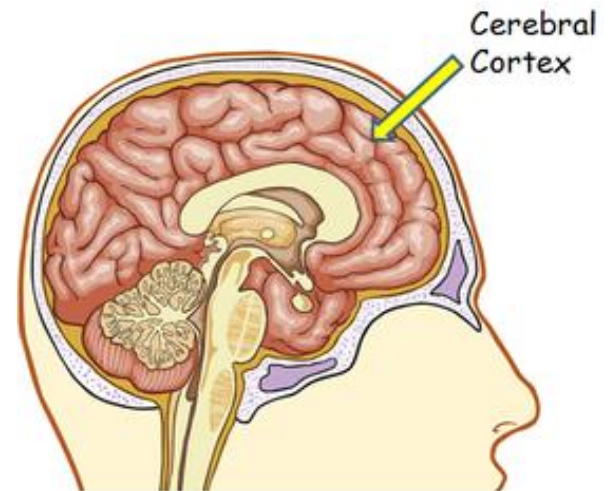


Internal working model of unworthiness



Compounded by traumatic experiences  
of abuse e.g. witnessing domestic violence, subjected to  
physical/sexual/ emotional abuse

# Cerebral Cortex



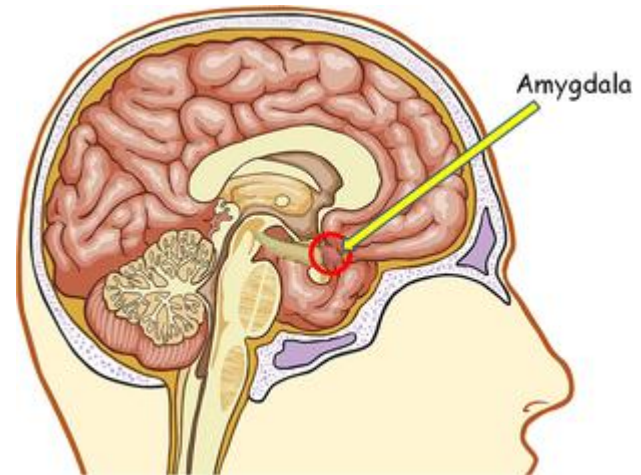
## *The Quick Facts*

**Location:** Outermost layer of the brain

**Function:** Responsible for thinking and processing information from the five senses

The Cerebral Cortex is made up of tightly packed neurons and is the wrinkly, outermost layer that surrounds the brain. It is also responsible for higher thought processes including speech and decision making . The cortex is divided into four different lobes, the [frontal](#), [parietal](#), [temporal](#), and [occipital](#), which are each responsible for processing different types of sensory information.

# Amygdala



## *The Quick Facts*

**Location:** Part of Limbic System, at the end of the hippocampus

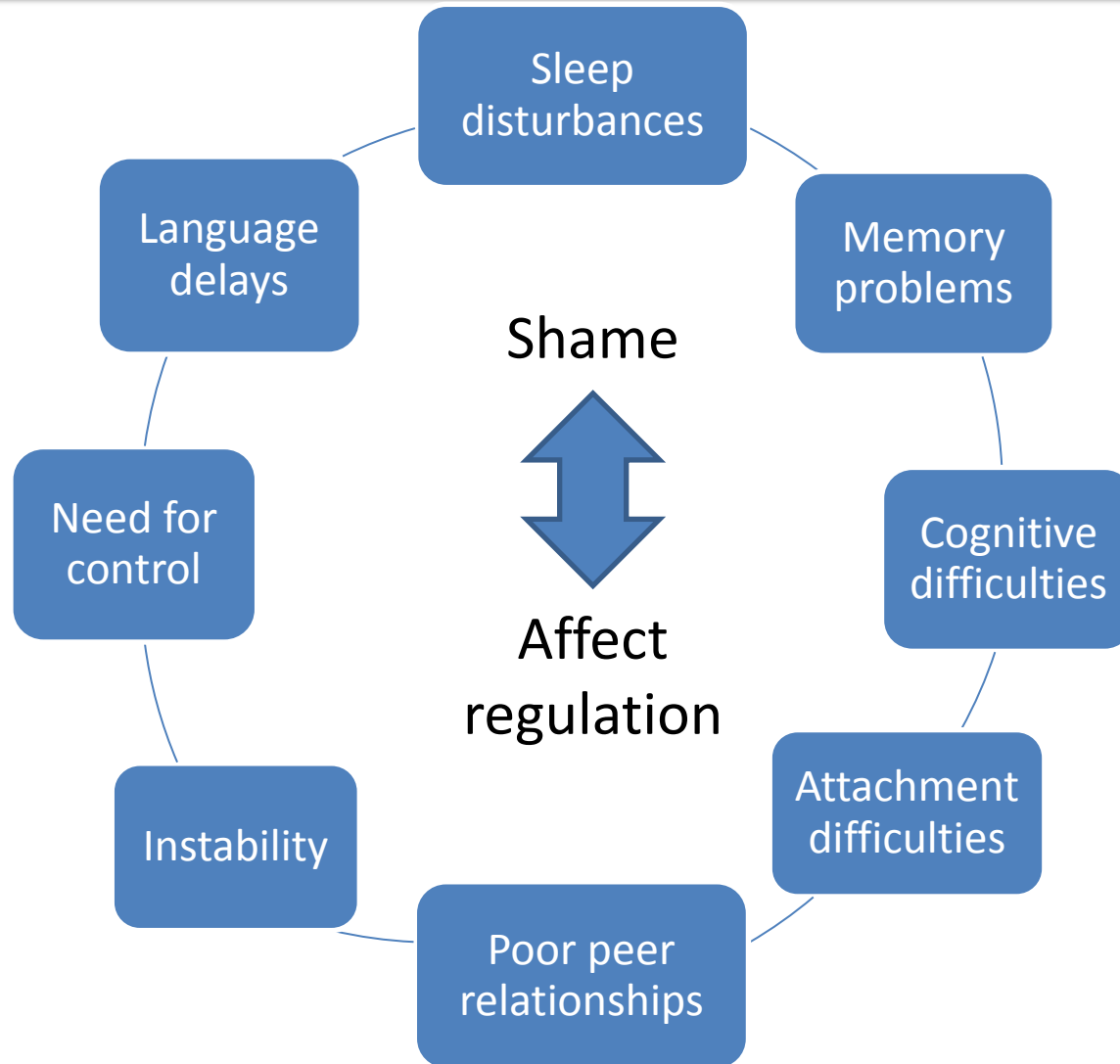
**Function:** Responsible for the response and memory of emotions, especially fear

When you think of the amygdala, you should think of one word. *Fear*. The amygdala is the reason we are afraid of things outside our control. It also controls the way we react to certain *stimuli*, or an event that causes an emotion, that we see as potentially threatening or dangerous.

# How complex trauma affects the developing brain

- Reduces capacity in thinking part of brain
- Impairs growth and activity of the bridge between left and right hemispheres
- Increased base arousal level – constant state of vigilance and heightened alarm
- Locks down capacity to adapt to change – rely on fixed and repetitive routines and behaviours when they feel distress or unease
- Limited range of coping strategies – survival mechanisms
- React rather than respond
- Beliefs about themselves are determined by the people who violate them – they hold onto ideas about relationships which are not helpful
- Find it difficult to see adults as supportive
- Do not easily understand or respond to consequential learning
- Memory systems are under constant stress
- Experience the present with little reference to the past – even though it is the past that has shaped their present. Transient sense of identity.

# Academic and social impacts

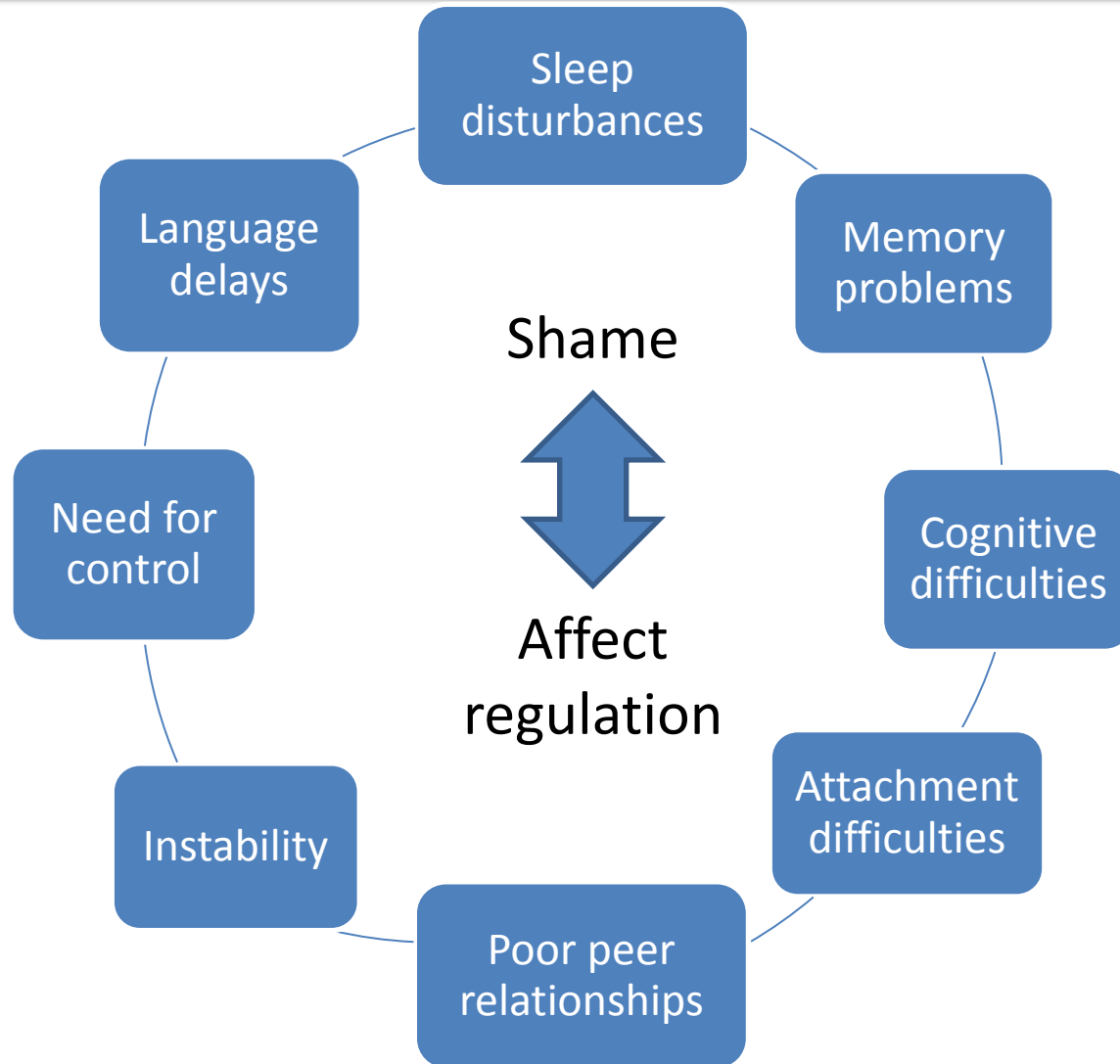


# Case study

- Michael

Discuss in which areas this child has the most difficulty in terms of social and academic functioning

# Academic and social impacts





# Activity

With your new partner

- Build on the profile of the student you shared initially – add any new understanding you have of their behaviour.

# Activity

With your new group

- Share with the group any new information / inclusive language

# What can I do?

“Teachers who understand the effects of trauma on children’s education, who are able to develop teaching practices to help them, and who are able to participate actively and collaboratively in the systems designed to support traumatised children will not only improve their educational outcomes but will assist in their healing and recovery.”

Introduction ‘Calmer Classrooms’

# Relationship Based Practice

- Teachers can do much to support traumatised children
- The focus here is on the relationship between teacher and child and also on the effectiveness of teachers becoming part of a wider support team.
- The crucial issues are
  - » Creating connection and defusing conflict
  - » Planning for challenging behaviour
  - » Participating in case management
  - » Cultural awareness
  - » Remembering self-care for teachers

- The central concept in working with these children is to be in control of the relationship without being controlling.
- Not being able to control you emotionally will eventually teach the child that it is safe to trust you

# Creating connection and diffusing conflict

- The quality of teacher-student relationships may be the single most important factor for positive adaptation to school - work on relationships with key adults first, then work on peer relationships
- Close, caring and supportive relationships can result in improved neurobiological function and improved behavioural and overall well-being outcomes
- It is vital that schools recognise that a student's behaviour reflects their relationship history and their maladaptive strategies for coping with stress and relatedness
- The student is likely to attempt to sabotage even the strongest of relationships
- "I'm here if you need me" "You're worth it" "I may not like what you're doing, but I like you"

# Creating connection and diffusing conflict

- Understand what is driving the child's behaviour
- Staff professional learning and open communication
- Identify and manage your own reactions
- 'I see you need help with' rather than 'this is your first warning'
- Structure and consistency – routines and preparing for transitions
- Setting limits on unacceptable behaviours
- **Time in, not out**
- Connecting – mentoring, check-in / check-out
- **Consequences not punishment**
- Acknowledge good decisions and choices
- Maintain your role
- Pick your battles
- Codes and symbols
- Relational rewards



# Activity

- Share with your partner any inclusive practice that you have seen in your school or a successful strategy you have used.

# Planning for challenging incidents

- Develop a support plan
- Communicate plan across school
- Establish safety
- Maintain self-regulation
- Calm the child – use trusted adults
- Assist the child to understand what happened
- Consequences – ‘fresh start’ rather than ‘prove yourself’
- Help the child to take responsibility
- Speak to other children / parents
- Allow time to calm before addressing behaviour – cortisol continues to rise after adrenalin has decreased

# Participating in case management

- Open communication and sharing of information with all stakeholders
- Seeking to support families accessing support services
- Regular case meetings
- Some family members may exhibit similar relational and behavioural traits to that of their child – have strategies in place and support key staff

# Cultural awareness

- Indigenous Australians – health issues
- Quality Teaching – relevance and significance of curriculum and pedagogy
- Understanding of Learning History of student and family
- Awareness of immigration story / cultural history
- Traumatized communities / intergenerational transmission of disorganized attachment
- Access to peers and role models of same culture

# Self-care for teachers

Who takes care of the carers?

- Regulation
- Reflection
- Relaxation

# Activity

- The little things in life.....

# STARS planning model

Safety	Trust and Attachment	Responsibility	Skills
Teacher understanding and skills	Establishing trustful teacher / student relationships	Explicit teaching and supportive classroom practice	Explicit teaching and supportive classroom practice
Explicit structures and routines	Explicit teaching and supportive classroom practice	Collaborative involvement of family and agencies	Opportunities to practice and demonstrate skills
Visual supports	Professional learning for staff – to increase consistency and predictability	Support for students to take responsibility	Support for students demonstrating skills
Crisis / risk management plans	Specific programs		Model positive interpersonal and positive behaviours
Collaborative involvement of family and agencies	Encourage formation of relationships		Adjustments to classroom activities
	Knowledge and respect for student		Collaborative involvement of family and agencies



# STARS model

	Safety	Trust and attachment	Responsibility	Skills
Characteristics				
Impact				
Strategies				

# Case study

## 1. Student A

In your group complete the strategies part of matrix for the student.

You will be sharing with the group some of the strategies you have identified as being useful.

A	Safety e.g at risk behaviours	Trust and attachment e.g. who is he comfortable with / sense of belonging	Responsibility e.g. self-help / self-regulation	Skills e.g. curriculum
Characteristics	<p>Poor reading of social cues – misreads negativity into situations where there is none</p> <p>Has hit out at peers – quick to anger, especially in unstructured time</p>	<p>Trusting of most school staff – gets on well with previous class teacher.</p> <p>Has conflict with one particular peer – unable to ‘let it go’</p> <p>Has asked to move class.</p> <p>Limited access to adult male role models / relationships</p> <p>Doesn’t like to be singled out for help / support</p>	<p>In unstructured time finds this very difficult</p> <p>Finds difficulty in expressing emotion</p> <p>Finds group wait time difficult – wants to rush</p>	<p>Participates effectively in class time when he sees work as relevant and accessible</p> <p>Working at stage level in KLAs</p> <p>Lacks motivation to produce best work at all times – rushes to complete in order to get it done</p>
Impact	<p>Has been suspended for punching other students</p> <p>Restricted playground areas as consequence – uses library effectively at times as a quiet place</p>	<p>Conflict in class common with a particular peer.</p> <p>Teaching and learning time reduced.</p> <p>Refuses one to one assistance</p> <p>Will not access school counsellor</p>	<p>Does not seek help in playground when conflict</p> <p>Becomes frustrated and starts to distract others from their learning.</p> <p>Doesn’t understand all instructions.</p> <p>Gaps in understanding.</p> <p>Intolerant to needs of peers and teacher.</p>	<p>Work lacks attention to detail – makes mistakes and lacks patience with feedback.</p> <p>Attainment does not reflect ability,</p>
Strategies				

# Case study

## 1. Student B

In your group complete the strategies part of matrix for the student.

You will be sharing with the group some of the strategies you have identified as being useful.

	Safety e.g at risk behaviours	Trust and attachment e.g. who is he comfortable with / sense of belonging	Responsibility e.g. self-help / self-regulation	Skills e.g. curriculum
Characteristics	<p>Absconding from safe areas – out of school</p> <p>No fences at school to prevent absconding</p> <p>When prevented from leaving room his behaviour has escalated to self-injurious behaviours</p> <p>Will also hide around school – vegetable patch / toilets</p>	<p>Trusting of few school staff – previous year’s teacher able to work with him</p> <p>Very strong attachment to mum – when mum leaves he become highly anxious and tries to follow</p> <p>Working well with counsellor from Catholic Care</p> <p>Does relate well to some peers</p>	<p>Finds difficulty recognising and expressing emotions and needs</p> <p>Flight response very strong</p> <p>Finds difficulty coping with any changes to routine</p>	<p>Uses an ipad effectively to engage</p> <p>Traces letters and completes drawing but accessing little curriculum at this time</p>
Impact	<p>Stressful for staff</p> <p>Unsafe for student</p>	<p>He feels anxious during class time</p> <p>Little learning completed</p> <p>When heightened anxiety few people who can calm him</p>	<p>Reacting majority of the time – unable to self-calm</p>	<p>Not currently meeting stage outcomes</p>
Strategies				

# What we actually did

Asimina Salvartsis

# Resources

- Calmer Classrooms / Great expectations / From Isolation to Connection

[http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/publications/orgs\\_resources.htm](http://www.ccyp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/publications/orgs_resources.htm)

- Making Space for Learning and the SMART Program  
(Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma)

<http://www.childhood.org.au/resources/>

- Dr Bruce Perry

<http://www.childtrauma.org/>

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/trauma-toolkit>

# Resilience / mindfulness programs

- Mindup  
<http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/>
- Andrew Fuller. Clinical Psychologist. **Inyahead** and the Heart Master Series.  
[andrewfuller.com.au](http://andrewfuller.com.au)
- Lyn Worsley and Ruth Fordyce. **The Resilience Doughnut**.  
[www.theresiliencedoughnut.com.au](http://www.theresiliencedoughnut.com.au)
- Bounce Back – A classroom Resilience Program.  
[www.bounceback.com.au](http://www.bounceback.com.au)
- **Mind Matters** – Mental health Promotion Resources. Professional learning workshops.  
[www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters)